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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
MONDAY, MAY 12, 2008

In Today's Papers

Turkish Warplanes Strike PKK Positions in Iraq
All papers report the Turkish General Staff's (TGS) announcement on May 10, which reports Turkish warplanes bombed PKK camps in the Avasin-Basyan region of northern Iraq. Under the headline "Broadcasts From Kandil Are Cut," Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak claims Roj TV, known to be the mouthpiece of the PKK, was "silenced" when it was bombed and destroyed by Turkish forces. The TGS statement said, "Following the operation, the majority of the 200 terrorists who were on Mount Kandil have fled. This development shows the organization was in a state of panic and its members' morale was very low." The statement noted the PKK's armed wing commander Fahman Huseyin, known as "Bahoz Erdal," abandoned the Zap area and fled to the Sinaht-Haftanin area. In addition, the statement said Murat Karayilan, had fled to the Mount Gara region.

Meanwhile, papers report on their front pages six soldiers were killed on Friday night when the PKK attacked the Aktutun outpost, which is in Hakkari province on the border with Iraq. The soldiers were laid to rest in their hometowns on Sunday. Liberal Radikal writes, "On Mother's Day, mothers bury six sons killed in clashes with the PKK," as "tens of thousands joined the funerals." Papers also report Prime Minister Erdogan said Turkey would not concede in its fight against terror. The PM called on the terrorists to "disarm, return home, and benefit from the repentence law."

In a related story, mainstream Hurriyet reported on Saturday that TGS shared intelligence with Iran regarding the whereabouts of the PKK's second in command Cemil Bayik. According to this intelligence, Bayik fled to Iran with 200 of his men. The Iranian authorities said military operations had been launched against Bayik and his team.

Amb. Wilson: "The U.S. Supports Turkey's Democratic Values, Secularist Roots"
U.S. Ambassador Ross Wilson spoke to mainstream Milliyet and leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet columnists over the weekend. Under the front-page headline, "I Am Not Using the Term 'Moderate Islam,' "

Milliyet quotes Ambassador Wilson as saying the U.S. supports "Turkey's democratic values and its secularist roots." Wilson said the U.S. was happy to see contacts improving between Turkey and northern Iraq. He stressed the U.S. "does not support or reject Fetullah Gulen's movement or his believers." He added, "Gulen has acquired a U.S. visa; the U.S. does not apply ideological or religious tests for visa applicants." Wilson also said Turkey and Armenia should face their past, but at the same time they should look toward the future.

Cumhuriyet reports in "Moderate Messages from the U.S.," that Wilson said, "The U.S. is watching the closure case against the AKP carefully." Wilson emphasized, "During the Cold War, Eastern Europe was the center of expected tensions, today these tensions are around Turkey." Wilson noted the U.S. was in "harmonious cooperation" with the Turkish military, and that dialogue has helped solve the problems in the fight against terror. On Iraq, Wilson said "A new president may change U.S. policy in Iraq, in order to be successful; we believe it will be necessary to work with Turkey."

Editorial Commentary on Ambassador Wilson Interviews

"The U.S. Position"

Fikret Bila wrote in mainstream Milliyet (5/11): "Ambassador Ross Wilson, in a well-crafted manner, told Milliyet about Washington's positions on matters that are very important to Turkey. Wilson detailed Washington's position regarding democracy, secularism, moderate Islam and PKK, which soothed worries in Turkish public opinion regarding those matters. Ambassador Wilson clearly stated that Washington has no 'moderate Islam project' for Turkey. He even

ANKARA 00000910 002 OF 003

explained that Americans use the term 'moderate Islam' as an abbreviation. He enhanced his message on this issue by emphasizing U.S. support for a democratic and secular Turkey. The PKK issue undoubtedly is the most significant reason for the Turkish public opinion's skepticism about U.S. support for Turkey's fight against the PKK. There was a strong perception the U.S. used to help the PKK and did not do enough to support Turkey's fight against the PKK.

Ambassador Ross Wilson clearly wanted to change this perception. He talked about the armed struggle against terrorism and steps toward eliminating the PKK terrorist organization's recruiting conditions. According to Wilson, economic development will run the PKK out of business. However, in the mean time, the U.S. will continue to keep Iraqi airspace available for Turkish air operations. At the same time, KRG President Massoud Barzani made some encouraging statements regarding rapprochement with Turkey. All of these developments are justifications for Ambassador Wilson's depiction of U.S. efforts to support Turkey in the fight against the PKK."

"An Ally?"

Tamer Korkmaz wrote in Islamist Yeni Safak (5/12): "Milliyet and Cumhuriyet carried interviews with the U.S. Ambassador Ross Wilson. Known to be a pragmatic person, Ambassador Wilson was careful to give well-measured messages. In his Milliyet interview, Wilson categorically denied speculations about U.S. support for PJAK. He said, 'The U.S. has nothing to do with PJAK and does not support or work with PJAK.' Yet only a month ago, Osman Ocalan, a top PKK leader, told the LA Times, 'The U.S. supports both the PKK and PJAK, but keeps this support on an unofficial level in order to be able to deny it when pressured.' It is fair to ask why the U.S., Turkey's strong ally, did nothing for Turkey in its fight against PKK terror for 24 years. The November 5th summit was presented as a big achievement for us; President Bush promised to provide intelligence assistance in the fight against the PKK. However the share of intelligence, especially regarding terrorism, is a must among NATO allies. The U.S. did not care about this obligation to Turkey for 24 years. The fact of the matter is for over two decades, the U.S. did not side with Turkey in its fight against terrorism; moreover, the U.S. supported the PKK. When Turkey showed its full determination to finish off the PKK during cross-border operations, even without the support of the U.S., then Washington had no choice but to support Turkey in order to not to lose any further prestige. On this issue, the United States is the side who was obliged to provide support to Turkey's cross border operations into northern

Iraq."

PKK/PJAK Clash with Iran Forces

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Taraf, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others feature reports of intense fighting between the Iranian military and the PKK/PJAK along the Iraq-Iran border. The fighting is situated in the Kaledize region on the Iraqi side, as well as the Serdest, Konemisk, Mahabat, and Piransar regions on the Iranian side. Papers quote Jabbar Yawar, spokesman for the Peshmerge Forces, as saying heavy clashes were taking place in the Casusan and Doletuk regions on the Iranian side of Kandil. "These clashes have been continuing sporadically since Sunday," said Yawar.

PKK Attacks Civilians and Soldiers

Saturday's mainstream Hurriyet and Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak report that the PKK detonated a remote-control land mine Friday morning, which hit a village minibus en route between Batman and Yuvalicay. Four people died and another four were seriously injured in the attack. Hurriyet reports that the minibus was carrying village guards, a village teacher and other local residents. Yeni Safak reports, "PKK terrorists detonated a road-side explosive in Bingol while a military vehicle was passing by. One non-commissioned officer and two soldiers were injured."

Council of State (Danistay) Calls on the EU to Respect Turkish Judiciary

ANKARA 00000910 003 OF 003

Sunday's papers reported on the comments of Danistay (Council of State) President Sumru Cortoglu at the 140th anniversary of Danistay's establishment. Cortoglu said "We support constitutional amendment initiatives that are in line with the fundamental and irrevocable principles of our Republic and universal values that meet the needs of all segments of society, and that guarantee and improve human rights and freedoms. Foreigners should show the same respect to the independent Turkish judiciary as they show to their own judicial organs, lawsuits and verdicts." Cortoglu added, "Judicial decisions can be criticized, however the criticism should be made carefully and people should refrain from accusing judicial staff when criticizing." Sumru Cortoglu will retire tomorrow.

The Government's Security Test With the EU

Liberal Radikal reports that the 24th chapter of EU membership talks signals problems. The chapter is entitled, "Justice, Freedom, and Security," and requires Turkey to adopt a guide for police behavior, pass laws regarding police ethics, establish an autonomous committee to review reports of human rights violations by police, and establish an independent and effective system for dealing with complaints against the police. These EU negotiations face difficulty as the police and gendarmerie oppose the idea of inspections by an autonomous committee related to civil rights violations.

TV News:

CNN Turk

Domestic News

- Turkey's special envoy to Iraq, Ambassador Murat Ozcelik, will meet with the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) President Massoud Barzani in northern Iraq this week.

- A survey conducted by the Ankara Chamber of Trade says 15.4 percent of Turkish people live below the poverty line.

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a USD 3.65 billion loan to Turkey, the final segment of a three-year standby credit.

International News

- Foreign Minister Ali Babacan said Turkey would have decreased the number of its troops in Cyprus if the Greek Cypriots had backed the Annan Plan for reunification.

- The Arab League will send a high-level delegation to Beirut in an

effort to mediate a way out of Lebanon's civil strife.

- Iraqi security forces launched a massive offensive against al-Qaeda militants in the city of Mosul over the weekend.

WILSON